

Message Text

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DRAFTED BY M/MO:RGMAYS, JR.

APPROVED BY M/MO:CEMCMANAWAY

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TO AMEMBASSY BERN PRIORITY

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E.O. 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: MODE - FBI REGIONAL OFFICE

REF: AMBASSADOR'S LETTER TO JOAN CLARK 6-16-76

1. AT DEPARTMENT'S REQUEST JUSTICE DEPARTMENT AND FBI
HAVE REVIEWED QUESTION OF MAINTAINING THE LEGAL ATTACHE
OFFICE AT BERN. THEIR CONCLUSION IS THAT THE OFFICE
SHOULD REMAIN OPEN.

2. LETTER FROM JUSTICE CONTAINS FOLLOWING ARGUMENTS
SUPPORTING THEIR CONCLUSION:

QUOTE. LIAISON COVERAGE IN SWITZERLAND, THE CENTER OF
INTERNATIONAL BANKING AND FINANCE, INVOLVES A UNIQUE
PROBLEM. THIS COUNTRY IS ATTRACTIVE TO AMERICAN CONFIDENCE
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MEN AND CRIMINALS AS A PLACE TO RAISE CASH ON THE BASIS OF

STOLEN, COUNTERFEIT OR WORTHLESS SECURITIES. INSTITUTIONS IN SWITZERLAND HAVE ALSO BEEN UTILIZED BY THE CRIMINAL ELEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES TO SECRETLY SAFEGUARD THE MONEY WHICH THEY HAVE ACQUIRED AS A RESULT OF THEIR ILLEGAL ACTIVITIES IN THE UNITED STATES. THE LEGAL ATTACHE OFFICE IN BERN HAS BEEN ABLE TO OBTAIN INVALUABLE INFORMATION AND COOPERATION FROM SWISS AUTHORITIES ON SUCH CASES AND ON RELATED CASES INVOLVING WHITE COLLAR CRIME. THE VOLUME AND IMPORTANCE OF SUCH CASES IN THE PAST HAS FULLY JUSTIFIED THE STATIONING OF AN AGENT IN BERN. EXPERIENCE INDICATES MAJOR CASES WITH RAMIFICATIONS IN SWITZERLAND ARE INCREASING IN NUMBER. ALTHOUGH IT IS DIFFICULT TO DEFINITELY DETERMINE THE IMPACT OF THE U.S.-SWISS TREATY ON MUTUAL ASSISTANCE IN CRIMINAL MATTERS WHICH BECOMES EFFECTIVE IN 1977, IT APPEARS PROBABLE THAT IT COULD RESULT IN A STILL GREATER INCREASE IN MATTERS WITHIN THE FBI'S JURISDICTION WHICH REQUIRE COOPERATION FROM SWISS AUTHORITIES.

CONSIDERATION HAS BEEN GIVEN TO CONSOLIDATING THE PRESENT TERRITORY OF THE BERN OFFICE WITH THAT OF EXISTING LEGAT OFFICES IN EUROPE. IT SHOULD BE NOTED THAT DURING THE LAST FEW YEARS THE FBI HAS DRASTICALLY REDUCED THE NUMBER OF FOREIGN OFFICES AND THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL ASSIGNED ABROAD IN ORDER TO KEEP OVERSEAS EMPLOYMENT AT AN ABSOLUTE MINIMUM. THE BUREAU'S EUROPEAN OFFICES, NONE OF WHICH HAVE MORE THAN TWO AGENTS ASSIGNED AND EACH OF WHICH ALREADY HANDLE SEVERAL COUNTRIES; ARE FULLY OCCUPIED WITH THEIR CURRENT WORKLOAD. NONE OF THESE OFFICES ARE, THEREFORE, SUFFICIENTLY STAFFED TO HANDLE ADDITIONAL COUNTRIES SUCH AS SWITZERLAND, AUSTRIA, AND LIECHTENSTEIN. END QUOTE.

3. IN SUM, JUSTICE BELIEVES COMPLEXITY OF THE CASES INVOLVED, THE NEED FOR PROMPT ACTION, SWISS SENSITIVITY WITH REGARD TO SOVEREIGNTY, AND THE INTRICACIES OF THE SWISS LAW ENFORCEMENT SYSTEM REQUIRE THE PRESENCE OF AN EXPERIENCED AGENT ON THE SCENE IN SWITZERLAND TO INSURE THAT CRIMINAL JUSTICE MATTERS OF INTEREST TO THE UNITED STATES CAN CONTINUE TO BE PROPERLY AND EFFECTIVELY
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HANDLED.

4. SINCE LEGAT GRUSH RETIRES SEPTEMBER 24 FBI DESIRES TO RESOLVE ISSUE SOON. WOULD APPRECIATE ASAP RECEIVING COM COMMENTS ON JUSTICE RATIONALE, ESPECIALLY APPARENT AND ANTICIPATED INCREASE IN LEGAT WORKLOAD. KISSINGER

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